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BLECHBUSTERS

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For the past few months, I've dedicated this column to actors who hog the spotlight by appearing in more than one current release at the same time. This time I'm forced to let *four* actors share the honors - Robert DeNiro, Christopher Walken, Al Pacino and Don Rickles (!) have all shoved their way onto more than one marquee at the multiplex. Ashley "Li'l Sister" Judd also turns in supporting roles in two features, but had the good taste to have them released a couple months apart. And we hear so many complaints about good actors out of work. We have 15 titles to cover here, as studios compete for holiday dollars and Oscar nominations, so let's dive right in.

SMOKE

Set in 1990 (for no apparent reason other than that's when the events portrayed in Paul Auster's stories may have actually taken place), this warm, cuddly feature from Wayne Wang follows the various characters connected to Harvey Keitel's Brooklyn tobacco shop through various odd twists and turns. Crystallizes the post-Quentin era during the scene where Keitel tells a long story over lunch in a diner - if it had ended in bloody gunplay, you'd swear Tarantino himself was directing. I'm thinking this would make a great TV series. Costars a great ensemble cast including William Hurt, Forrest Whitaker, Harold Perrineau, Stockard

Channing, and Ashley Judd as a dirty blonde crack addict.

TWELVE MONKEYS

Director Terry "Patsy" Gilliam returns with a solid hit. Blechbusters favorite Bruce Willis is excellent as a confused convict from the future sent back to the '90s to discover the cause of a plague that wiped out most of the human race. He's stashed in an asylum. Psychiatrist Madelaine Stowe thinks he's nuts, but a fellow inmate (Brad Pitt, in a looney tunes perf) takes him all too seriously. The old hat Time Paradox plotline is slightly annoying, but by concentrating on the characters, while delivering some beautiful visuals and subtle f/x (especially during the zoo-animals-on-the-loose

climax), Gilliam succeeds in delivering his most accessible work to date without compromising his artistic sensibilities. His fans won't be disappointed by his cluttered underground world of the future, which isn't too far from his vision in *Brazil*.

JUMANJI

If you were wondering where those 12 monkeys went in *Twelve Monkeys*, you can find them here - running wild like simian versions of Joe Dante's *Gremlins*, along with a whole menagerie in our second zoo-animals-on-the-loose sequence of the month. *Jumanji* translates loosely from Swahili as "*Hellraiser* for kids". The same guys that made those creepy puzzle boxes apparently made the title board game, which presents a new deadly peril with each roll of the dice. A boy digs it up in the '60s and starts to play. It eats him. 30 years later, some kids start the game again and let him out. They're horrified to discover that he's grown into Robin Williams, and the only way to make the madness go away is to finish the game. By the squealing going on in the audience, I'd say this one delivers the thrills for the kiddies, while the light atmosphere and humor will keep

adults amused. Also stars TV favorites Bonnie Hunt, David Alan Grier, and Annie Potts.

TOY STORY

More lively playthings. The theme of toys that come to life is nothing new - it goes back at least as far as *The Nutcracker* - but that doesn't mean that it doesn't still work. Here it works wonderfully. Little Andy's favorite cowboy doll Woody (voiced by Tom Hanks) gets lost in the excitement when flashy new action figure Buzz Lightyear (Tim Allen) arrives as a birthday present. The conflict between them is complicated when they're both lost and have to help each other get home. Digital animation experts at Pixar work well together with animated feature experts at Disney, giving us a film full of visual wonders, complex characters, and sly comedy. With Jim Varney, Wallace Shawn and Don Rickles as Mr. Potato Head.

CASINO

Rickles doesn't play Mr. Potato Head here - he just looks like him as sidekick to Robert DeNiro's pro gambler turned '70s Vegas casino boss. DeNiro does a good job shoveling money off the tables for the mob bosses "back home", but

monkey wrenches are thrown into the works. Vicious boy-hood chum Joe Pesci draws undue heat with his old fashioned head-busting methods, and gold-digging beauty Sharon Stone devolves into a shrieking coke-filled harpy. He gets in further trouble by firing inept (but connected) pit boss Joe Bob Briggs(!), and the FBI watches his every move. All the pressure makes him so nuts that he gets his own TV talk show. This is basically Scorsese's retread of his own *Goodfellas* on a larger scale, and so takes a good hour longer for things to unravel. Gets lost in its own histrionics during the third act, but Scorsese's work is always worth seeing. Stone has no trouble swiping scenes from the low-key performance of DeNiro, while Pesci seems to be almost sending up his past roles.

HEAT

Another year-end 3 hour opus. Robert DeNiro is a workaholic master thief obsessed with making a big score, while his personal life shrivels. Al Pacino is a workaholic super cop obsessed with catching crooks like DeNiro, while his personal life crumbles. At 2 hours, this would have been a tight, faced-paced cops & robbers thriller, with pulse pounding

action sequences, but director Michael Mann adds an extra hour of drama, detail, suspense, and dozens of great character actors (including Val "Batman" Kilmer as one of the gang, and the above-mentioned Judd, still a dirty blonde as Kilmer's impatient wife). The final product is both an exciting suspense thriller and a chilling portrait of men swallowed whole by their professions. Features a terrific gun battle in downtown LA, where everybody has huge machine guns.

TWO BITS

For contrast, Pacino shows up in this smaller-scaled film as a feeble old man, waiting to die in 1930s Philadelphia. His grandson is promised a quarter when he dies, which leads to a sticky emotional conflict: the boy wants desperately to take in the 25-cent opening day show at the new movie theater, but doesn't want to get it through the death of beloved Grampa (can't wait for the video, I guess). We follow him through the depression-maddened streets, as he spends the day trying to scrape up the required 2 bits. Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio gets extra points for letting herself look less than radiant as the worn-out widowed

mom. Charming entertainment in an old fashioned short story mode.

THE ADDICTION

Abel Ferrara extends his fascination with victims turned predator, as well as his fixation with addictions of all kinds, with this atmospheric neo-vampire feature. Lily Taylor is great as a philosophy student who goes from being outraged by war atrocity footage to making excuses for her own atrocities after contracting the vampire virus. Psychotronic star Christopher Walken adds to his legend, typecast as the older vampire that helps Taylor deal with her condition. This is the third low budget black & white movie about a female vampire to be released in 1995. It's the best of the three, but the only one that may have benefited from a little color - especially during the horrific & bloody climax.

DRACULA DEAD AND LOVING IT

Mel Brooks lives and we're hating it! The past master of screen comedy takes aim at the vampire genre, but misses the target entirely, wasting nearly every opportunity in a story rich with comic possibilities. Can Brooks have become so out of touch that he thinks this is good enough?

Wakes up at various points - notably in the justly praised staking scene - but this will be best caught on cable, where you can change the channel once in a while.

ACE VENTURA - WHEN NATURE CALLS

Jim Carrey and Bob Odenkirk show the old timers how it's done in this sequel to their surprise hit. Even when a joke falls flat, a good one follows it so fast that you don't have time to think about it. Starts out by risking everything by making a joke out of the death of a raccoon - but since it's a shot-for-shot swipe from *Cliffhanger*, you can't help but laugh. From there, our cartoonish Pet Detective hero goes on to parody every jungle movie ever made in his search for the sacred white bat of an African tribe. You may hate yourself, but Carrey still knows how to make mucus funny.

MONEY TRAIN

Wesley Snipes and Woody Harrelson may be having the time of their lives pretending they're the Hope & Crosby of the '90s, but they should let the audience in on the fun. They play two NYC transit cops who end up trying to rob the title choo-choo, but the plot waffles around too much by trying to make sure our boys keep our

sympathy. Might've been better if they'd taken a chance by making the stars into outright thieves and gotten to the heist flick thrills a lot sooner. Only villain Robert Blake seems to treat the material with the proper amount of teeth-gnashing disdain.

NICK OF TIME

Whoa - they're just asking for critics to call this *Waste of Time* (what are they thinking when they come up with these titles?). It's a good enough Hitchcock-style premise: unless action hero Johnny Depp (!) assassinates the governor of California Marsha Mason in one hour, bad guy Christopher Walken will kill his daughter. Walken chews the material well, but since we all know that nothing will happen until the last minute, and no real surprises pop up, it's pretty easy to lose interest.

SUDDEN DEATH

Jean Claude Van Damme finally gets around to ripping off *Die Hard*. The setting is inspired - terrorists led by underrated Powers Boothe hold a hockey stadium hostage during the final game of the Stanley Cup - but for the most part the action and suspense are all so by the book that they barely measure on the ol' thrill-o-meter. The

big surprise here is that Van Damme is actually growing up to be a pretty good actor (no joke). There are some more imaginative scenes to catch here, as when our hero escapes the gang by taking to the ice disguised as the goalie, and during his life and death kung fu battle with a woman in a penguin costume.

OTHELLO

Laurence Fishbourne is the smoldering title generalissimo, who's happy as a clam ordering white folks around his gloomy castle until his good buddy Iago (Kenneth Branagh) tricks him into thinking that his pretty young wife is fooling around. Branagh steals the show as the charming schemer, making like *Ferris Bueller* with frequent amusing asides to the audience, boldly bragging about his villainy. Why isn't scripter William Shakespeare making as much loot as Joe Esterhaus?

THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT

Michael Douglas takes the reins as Commander-In-Chief in Rob Reiner's charming comedy, in which a widowed Prez starts dating a cute lobbyist (Annette Bening). This is not only a breezy and intelligent modern comedy, but also Reiner's note of

appreciation to those that take on one of the toughest jobs in the world, and doesn't skim over the issues at hand. Hard line Republicans may chafe at Richard Dreyfuss' mustache-twirling as a sinister conservative Senator, but it lets Douglas save the day with a kick ass press conference speech. Whatever the case, he's proved himself to be a much better President than that doltish wimp Kevin Kline in *Dave*.

I would've seen *Nixon*, but after so many years of that guy, it'll take a

while for me to work up the stomach for 3 hours more.

Big news for Blechbusters fans: if you like my capsule reviews here, you can now check out expanded versions of some of them, plus other features, at my **IDN Cinema** section of the new *Internet Daily News* on the World Wide Web. Just tune in to <http://tvp.com/idn/cissue/entcin.html>

. New reviews every Friday (for now). Also, look for me in issues of **Video Watchdog**, and ask your local book store for **VideHound's Complete Guide to Cult Flicks and Trash Pics**.

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TOD BROWNING

Unlike the so-called masters of film directing, whose visual style became so much leitmotif that ardent film enthusiasts claim they can spot a Griffith, a DeMille, a Hawks, a Ford or a Hitchcock just by looking at a single scene, Tod Browning was no great visual stylist. It can be argued that he was no great director, period. A clue to his importance, however, is that in the self-constricting world of film academia one discovers just as many critics wishing to dismiss him as one does critics championing a career often overlooked and underappreciated.

Browning made 62 films as a movie director, but it is his final string of bizzare tales—and in particular his *Dracula* and *Freaks*—that have assured him a place in the annals of horror movie greats; a place he doubtlessly would find bittersweet considering his dislike for the finished version of the vampire tale and his resounding manner in which the latter circus melodrama tolled the death-knell on his career.

Charles Albert "Tod" Browning, not unlike many of his films, was both strange and mysterious. Authors David Skal and Elias Savada, in their 1995 bio of the director entitled *Dark Carnival*, painstakingly unearthed, dusted off and examined with a fine-toothed comb every document available on the man, and yet they still couldn't manage a volume over a scant 217 pages. Despite their excellent work, one never really gets a sense of who this man was, as there is far less personality than there is the piecing together of events and facts and figures.

The apparent dichotomy arises from his famed running away from his Louisville home as a teenager to join a travelling carnival, eventually becoming a blackface comedian (part of an act called "Lizard and Coon"), then a sideshow attraction known as "The Hypnotic Living Corpse" (a live, premature burial act up to 48 hours in length sometimes), and then a stage

and film comedian who acted in 52 short films from 1913-1915; all this show business, all this caught up with being a showman, and yet he refused to show much of anything of himself that wasn't in front of a curtain or projected on a wall. No wonder, perhaps, given that his peers were illusionists, vaudevillians, escape artists, contortionists and magicians.

A popular gig playing Mutt in a live-action version of the comic strip "Mutt and Jeff" in the burlesque show *The Whirl of Mirth* (1913) took him to Brooklyn where he met D.W. Griffith, who used him in a couple of comedy shorts and then took Browning along to Los Angeles. The young comic met actress Alice Houghton, whom he married (his first marriage having lasted just four years), and then began to direct one and two reelers.

Besides loving show business, Browning had at least two other overpowering passions: baseball (his uncle Pete Browning is the man for whom the Louisville Slugger was fashioned) and booze. Browning was the intoxicated driver of an automobile that smashed into a train flatbed in the Pacific Coast fog in 1915, horribly killing comedian Elmer Booth, who was sitting in the passenger seat beside him.

After completing an assignment as one of seven assistant directors on "The Modern Story Sequence" of *Intolerance* (1916), Browning continued to write and direct without distinction until he met Irving Thalberg and, consequently, Lon Chaney at Universal in 1919. Both were to be instrumental to his rise and fall. Thalberg landed him his first substantial assignment, the direction of the quarter-million dollar spectacle *The Virgin of Stamboul* (1920), a pre-Sheik sheik movie that did quite well at the box-office.

Browning's partnership with Lon Chaney was a match made in psychosexual silent movie heaven. Browning would direct Lon in 100 feature films,

from 1919's *The Wicked Darling* to 1929's *Where East is East*, doing five of those in a row. The director's penchant for tales of physical constraint and cruelty were right up Lon's alley and the actor brought to vivid life an increasingly twisted array of wronged, tortured and physically deformed men for Browning's cameras: criminal mastermind Professor Echo of *The Unholy Three* (1925), transformed by love to repent and his voice-throwing skills to set free a man falsely accused; again a master criminal in *The Black Bird* (1926), disguising himself as a kindly cripple only to have fate see to his actual crippling before sending him to his maker; Singapore Joe, the hideous lecher in *The Road to Mandalay* (1926), caught up in a murderous sexual frenzy for the daughter he doesn't realize is his own; Alonzo the Armless, in *The Unknown* (1927), deliberately fashioning himself a sideshow freak by harnessing his arms, then willing to have them removed to consummate his love for the beauty who shuns a man's touch; both Inspector Burke of Scotland Yard and the nightmarish vampire in *London After Midnight* (1927), a lost film and also the biggest moneymaker of the Browning/Chaney collaborations; "Dead Legs" Flint, in *West of Zanzibar* (1928), an insanely embittered paralytic who rules as icon in a tiny African village where he single-mindedly, yet unknowingly destroys his own family; and "Tiger" Haynes, in *Where East is East* (1929), the scarred animal trapper also caught in the rending of his family through jealousies, seductions and the perfunctory homicidal ape on the loose.

Could Browning have been writing his autobiography here, in these sordid and darkly violent tales colliding Greek mythology with Freud, firearms and the fantastic? He was, in fact, a prolific writer who not only brought these weird stories and strange books to the attention of the studios, but wrote, adapted or provided the treatment for at least 17 of the films he directed. Known to be a singularly cold

man, who didn't even return to his hometown for his fathers' funeral, he once told of coming upon the sight of a woman slitting the throats of both of her children over a bathtub in a mid-western hotel. Family could be a monstrous institution.

Decked out in jodhpurs, megaphone and beret, Browning had a reputation as a temperamental whip-cracker on the set and it seems many of those who worked with him couldn't stand him in the least. A couple of substantial financial disasters (*Drifting* and *White Tiger*, both in 1923) and increasing difficulty dealing with his alcoholism lost him the job of directing Chaney in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*.

By the time *West of Zanzibar* was released in 1928, the critics had turned on him, sickened by the repetition and the insistence on depravity. In 1929, his contract with MGM was over and a year later Chaney was dead, too.

Dracula (1931), at Universal, was so big a hit that it rejuvenated his dangerously flailing career and was to become his eternal footnote in motion picture history, despite how quickly he lost interest in the project which officially represented his career box-office high. Back at MGM, and reunited with Thalberg, he embarked on *Freaks* (1932), perhaps his most personal work and the catalyst for his most personal and professional undoing. The film lost \$164,000 for the studio and Browning's very next film, a raunchy layman's comedy called *Fast Workers* (1933), became his biggest financial bomb ever.

Three more films would follow with Browning taking vastly reduced cuts in pay in order to get them made: *Mark of the Vampire* (1935), *The Devil Doll* (1936), and *Miracles for Sale* (1939), the first two even managing to become mild successes at the box office.

Tod Browning was taken off the MGM payroll in 1942, his wife Alice would die two years later, and he would spend the rest of his days a veritable recluse, though still wealthy enough to live quite comfortably in his Malibu home surrounded by ducks,

dogs and kegs of beer. Two long decades later, following a stroke, he died at age 82; *Freaks* had just been rediscovered on college campuses all over the country.

So while it may be true that one cannot necessarily tell a Tod Browning film by a signature sweep of the camera or a visual style that personifies his vision, one can most assuredly tell a Tod Browning film by its story, its recurrent and incessant themes: of crooks, crime and vengeance, sexual longing and punishment, family frac-

tures and self-destruction, a painful and cruel world of illusion and delusion.

Many of Browning's films are not widely available as yet on video, thus appreciation and reassessment of his work will no doubt occur as the trickle from vault to videotape take place. The following is a list of five Tod Browning films that are available on tape (or cable) and would serve as a nice introduction to what he did best and what he did worst.

Michael Ferguson

THE UNHOLY THREE (1925): After a 4 year separation, Browning and Chaney are reunited again under Thalberg at Metro for this hugely successful crime melodrama with a wicked twist. Browning combines at least two of his favorite settings, the crime world and the circus, in this tale of a trio of carnay outcasts (a ventriloquist, a midget and a strongman) who commence a vicious crime spree using a pet store as a front where the ventriloquist (Chaney) dresses as an old lady selling "talking" parrots. Naturally, the ventriloquist provides the voice for these bogus birds and Browning comes up with a humorous sight gag to indicate the parrot-speak in a silent film. The story is more than a bit silly, but is played with conviction and Browning is obviously having a lot of fun. Perhaps he was having too much "fun," as one scene involving midget Harry Earles being mistaken as a gift from Santa Claus by a little girl whose house is being robbed had its disturbing climax clipped by Metro's head office: the little bastard throttled her.

DRACULA (1931): The film that officially ushered in the American horror genre and became one of the great financial successes of the early 1930's (it single-handedly put Universal in the black that year), is also a significantly flawed film saved primarily by the performance of Bela Lugosi and the maniacal inspiration of Dwight Frye's Renfield. The famed first reel in Transylvania and at the Count's castle is so well photographed and appropriately slow and creepy that the rest of the film's insistence on a dialogue-stuffed version of the popular stage show becomes more and more painful as it progresses. Given the opportunity to visually exploit the supernatural subject matter without the explanation of real-world deceit (as the monster who turns out to be just a guy in a mask in most prior "scary" movies), Browning grinds the fantasy to a halt with unimaginative static camerawork that basically serves to film the stage play. His initial enthusiasm for the project apparently waned as Universal kept harping about the costs (it came in overbudget) and his alcoholism complicated matters. A joke on the set was that Browning's direction of *Dracula* consisted of telling cinematographer Karl Freund to nail the camera down in place and let it run. Some scenes in the finished film are presented in stagy tableau simply because Browning never got around to shooting his two-shots or close-ups. He had no contractual agreement for the final cut of this, his 56th directing job, and years later he bitterly spoke about the appalling job of editing from the scrapheap done on his most famous film. A bit of trivia: during the odd subjective-cameras glide on board the shipwrecked Vesta, it is Browning's own voice on the soundtrack declaring the discovery and "madness" of the sole survivor, a gleaming and gloating Renfield.

FREAKS (1932): Based on Tod Robbins' short story "Spurs," this is Browning's most famous and highly-touted cult picture, though *The Unknown* (1927) and the rarely seen expressionistic carnival tale he made called *The Show* (1927) may someday also draw attention. Exhibiting an innate sense of both our attraction to and repulsion by physical deformity, Browning fashions a nasty tale of beauty's corruption by greed in a world of misfits pledging to accept her as "one of us." Olga Baclanova's melodramatic, drunken rejection of the freaks and sexual humiliation of the midget who loves her, in the famed Wedding Feast sequence, brings about her own physical mutilation (and the off-screen castration of her strongman lover). It is powerful, disturbing stuff. Preview audiences were appalled and the studio cut 20 minutes from the original print. When it finally opened, it did such poor business that one would have guessed it would just dry up and disappear. Not so, as moralizing critics, women's and religious groups took it to task and made it a cause celebre. MGM, to its credit, waged a counter-attack in the trades, but the general public's disinterest (or distaste) and the sermonizing call to arms took its toll. *Freaks* was a disaster. Great Britain wouldn't screen it until 1962. Vehemently discussed and debated in the sixties by film students, the jury is still out on whether Browning was exploiting his cast of pinheads, half-torsos and other oddities or was in some way paying tribute to their world, their sense of family and loyalty (albeit in a horror setting).

MARK OF THE VAMPIRE: (1935) The definitive creaky old talkie with far too much lip-flapping and far too few thrills. A virtual remake of *London After Midnight*, it strikes me as somewhat pathetic to see Browning so literally robbing from his own success of just 8 years past because he so plainly needed a formula hit. An old mansion murder mystery with bogus supernatural overtones, this one employs a silent Bela Lugosi and a spooky Carroll Borland as his daughter Luna, to scare a crafty killer into confession. The film's static dialogue scenes are occasionally given reprieve by the appearance of the vampire couple, with the best scene an impressively gorgeous (but all too brief) glimpse at a winged Luna alighting inside the cavernous mansion dining hall. Once again, Browning was victimized by the censors, this time cutting scenarist Guy Endore's explanation of the bloody wound at Lugosi's temple. The original story reveals that Lugosi's Count Mora had an incestuous relationship with daughter Luna. Guilt-ridden, he murders her and shoots himself in the head, thereby damning them both to roam as members of the Undead. Lugosi was particularly embittered when a tagged-on finale, provided only after most of the shooting was completed, revealed he and Ms. Borland were only actors pretending to be vampires.

THE DEVIL DOLL (1936): In some ways, this is Browning's most technically accomplished work, with camerawork and special effects used effectively to tell the sordid revenge tale of a banker (Lionel Barrymore), framed and then wrongly imprisoned, who fortiously meets up with husband and wife scientists who have perfected the ability to shrink human beings (ostensibly to combat overpopulation and food shortages). When the husband dies, Barrymore and the wife team up to produce "living dolls" sent with steely knives and powered by the evil will of their creators to seek vengeance on those who wronged him and pull off a few jewel heists in the process. Browning borrows liberally from earlier works, most notably *The Unholy Three* (as Barrymore dons old lady drag as a front), but the result is more entertaining than it is derivative. Though he would direct one more film, this ably serves as a representative denouement for the misunderstood, enigmatic kid who ran away from home to be in show business only to discover that the 25 cent sideshows he barked for in the Midwest would no longer be financed to the tune of \$350,000 a pop in Production Codified Hollywoodland, U.S.A.: the dreams, the themes, the obsessions hadn't changed, simply nobody wanted to pay for them anymore.

IT'S ONLY A RUMOR

The government made the V-chip and censorship of the Internet the top priority to divert us from Bosnia. Well, how the hell is the the V-chip going to block out violence without major adult complaints? Hell-most adults can't even program a VCR—how will they work the chip? And, I have no idea how the Internet will be patrolled. It seems that laws are being passed without any regard to enforcement...*Michael Jordan* is set to star in an animated science fiction film! The film mixes live and computer animation, and is called *Space Jam*. It features most of the Warner Brothers cartoon characters, too. The animation is expected to take a year to complete...Hey, remember *Earth VS The Flying Saucers*? The cool footage of our world's monuments being destroyed? Get ready, because in 1996, there are three films, priced between 30 and 75 million dollars about aliens attacking and destroying earth!...We will have to screen *Earth VS The Flying Saucers* sometime in the coming months to remind people of the roots of the genre I guess we'll call "Earthwreckers"...Now that the unions have backed off, watch for more films to come to Chicago to shoot...*Dean Martin* is gone. For me, hearing about the Rat Pack in the early 60's was my first exposure to a cool group that knew how to have fun. Now there are only three members left. One of them is kooky-*Shirley MacLaine*. One is quiet-*Angie Dickinson*. One is the Chairman-*Frank Sinatra*. Oh yeah, I forgot *Jack Parr*. I think we'll do a Sinatra/Rat Pack month in March. Stay tuned!!...Watch the next issue for my report on the X-Files Convention in Chicago...*The Mu-*

seum of Broadcasting is awesome. If you go on a weekday, it's \$2.00 for all you can view! I saw the first *David Letterman* show (that was on mornings!) and *Playboy Penthouse* with Lenny Bruce! The Museum is at Michigan and Randolph in the Cultural Center. Two people can view the screen—check it out!...*Martine Beswick* and *Barbara Steele* are set to star in *Vampire Cult Queens From Hell* written by Andy Warhol/Roger Corman alumnus *Mary Woronov*...Watch for *James Dean* to appear on a new postage stamp...After the last dud film in the series, you won't believe this item—there will be a fourth *Aliens* film. Once again, *Sigourney Weaver* will become dictator of the film—she refused to use weapons in the last film in the interest of world peace. So, the last *Aliens* was marred with endless footage of her running through halls. Wonder what cause her next film will promote...*The Fly* is being made into a big budget musical in England...Talk shows that promised to avoid sleaze are being dropped left and right. Talk shows that make no such promises are doing fine...Nice try—over 100 DJ's supporting the Democratic Party tried to counter *Rush Limbaugh* and *G. Gordon Liddy*—not one came close...John Carpenter's *Escape From L.A.*, starring *Kurt Russell* and *Pam Grier* is in the works...*Prince* wants out of his contract with Warner Brothers. The former management was from Sinatra's Reprise label and got "retired" which has resulted in chaos with the label and poor support for The-Artist-Formerly-Known-As-Prince. He may not be doing albums under any name for years.....*Michael Flores*

ZINE REVIEWS

When sampling the following zines, always either send cash or make the check out to the person's name and not the zine. With the Internet gradually overtaking most zines (sooner or later IOAM will be on it), the art of tiny publishing is almost gone. Almost all of these are labors of love.

ELECTRIC WARHOL: Wyatt, 105 Schumate Ave., Maryland Hgts. MO 63043. Issue #2-\$1.00. You've seen his art on a couple of our covers, but wait until you see his sophomoric, lewd and vulgar humor in his own zine. You know I like it! After I saw the first issue, I knew he belonged on our covers! Sick, twisted fun!

HORRENDOUS: Matt Bradshaw, P.O. Box 3421, Manchester, NH 03105. Issue #2-\$1.25 an issue or \$5.00 for 4. Don't ask me how he does great photo repros-within one issue he now has a really cool looking newsletter. He reviews older Psychotronic films, but he also has started reviewing newer ones. Very enjoyable. He actually made me want to see *Tales From the Crypt Presents Demon Knight* and *Tales From the Hood*. Go ahead and subscribe.

8-TRACK MIND: Russ Forster, P.O. Box 90, East Detroit MI 48021-0090. Issue #87. \$2.00 an issue or \$8.00 a year. At every meeting I always try to talk someone into reading this. I tell them to go to Quimby's and buy it (see ad this issue). The poor person usually mumbles "I don't know if I like 8-Track that much." But it's so much more I tell them. Besides, you will love 8-Track. Trust me. Try it. (Quimby's also has back issues).

HONG KONG FILM CONNECTION: P.O. Box 867225, Plano TX 75086-7225. Volume 3 Issue 4. \$3.00. Clyde Gentry does this cool zine with the latest issue featuring Jackie Chan on the cover (next issue he has an interview with him-order it now!). This zine has great insights on both

the films and changing political scene in Hong Kong. If you've seen any of the recent Hong Kong movies or have any interest in exciting adventure films, get this one at once!

OGRE NETWORK: P.O. Box 53, Plainfield IL 60544, \$2.00 per issue. A Sub-Genius, Discordia, Euthanasian art-damage music review magazine!! This zine really does live up to all the titles in its proclamation. **Ogre Network** puts together all the oddballs in all the extreme genres in an entertaining and fun way.

HONG KONG FILM MAGAZINE: 601 Van Ness Ave. Suite E3728, San Francisco CA 94102. Ringo Lam special #4—\$4.75. 6 issues are \$23.00. Rolanda Chu has put together a terrific look at the controversial Ringo Lam who mags like *Film Threat* had accused Quentin T. of stealing his *Reservoir Dogs* from. Lam brushes aside such silly criticism in a nice interview and also reviews his best films. The magazine also covers the actual history of Kung Fu contrasted with the films. The magazine even explains nuances in the titles and slang that only the people of Hong Kong understand. There are Hong Kong film magazines that charge more and have far less information than **Hong Kong Film Magazine**. You can make your check out to the zine title—more than worth it.

MANSPLAT: Hairball Press, 2318 2nd Ave., Suite 591, Seattle WA 98121. \$2.00 per issue-Issue #2. **Mansplat** promises to cover the world of schlock through a case of beer. There are listings of monsters who battled Godzilla (most of them would make cool names for rock bands). The whole issue is like the *Weekly World News* or *The Sun* tabloids on too much alcohol. If you like beer and monsters, this one's for you.

Got a zine? Wanna write a letter? Don't let me stop you! Send it in!

Mike Flores

IOAM NEWSLETTER #11

PSC#OTRONIC RUMBLINGS

There are reasons that I will never use the term Progressive to describe myself, and why I disdain the word. Two events have occurred which have caused me to think about this issue. The first appeared in the January issue of the *Lumpen Times*. The article is **What is Left?** by David Peterson. For over twenty years I have argued that the terms Left and Right no longer fit our political world. There are people on the Right who think the way they do—not out of greed but because the government-based solutions promoted by the Left simply haven't worked. This critique has been ignored until the last year when several Leftist publications began a rather limited search for new definitions.

After wrestling with the critique of political tags in his article, David Peterson comes up with the new, unbiased definitions. He defines the Left as being interested in "the general interests of humanity," while on the other hand, the Right is "narrowly constructed...mutilated interests of the wealthy, the powerful and the privileged." The fact that no editor reading this piece would immediately spot the silly propaganda in the definitions is why I am not a Progressive.

The second thing that happened to me was that a theatre company had looked at a script for my play *The Bride and the Beast* and the person reading it said she couldn't put the show up because "it would offend the far Right. I like it, but you know how they are." Her first mistake was presuming I was Progressive. Two thirds of my backers are

conservatives in the far Right. I noted that she was doing a show about homosexuality and she said that was different. All over the country, Progressives are censoring messages and ideas and blaming the far Right. I told her to name these organized censors and my backers would call them. In fact, they probably even knew their home phone numbers. She thought I was kidding.

I'm not. Gloria Steinem censored a Smithsonian exhibit on Freud; angry Blacks were offended by an exhibit on slavery; and it was removed. Progressives are pro-censorship. I'm not. If I don't like your work, I'll tell you. I will not blame the climate in the country. Nor, on the other hand, will I go out of my way to stop you from working, harass you or spread lies about you. All of these things have happened to me in my life—from so-called Progressives!

I am a pro-abortion conservative. When I drive by Cabrini Green, and see what happens when the government pays people to have kids, I get sick to my stomach. Yet, most people are shocked to discover that a conservative can be pro-abortion. Progressives feel they are more humanitarian and if you disagree with them, you are less so. They foam at the mouth at the so-called far Right. But none of the candidates backed by the far Right won any seats in either the House or the Senate. I would say Conservatives listen to the far Right the same way Clinton listens to the far Left—hardly at all.

Sadly, there is no real Left in this country. They were long ago co-opted by Europe and Communism,

and then by the Democratic Party. When a Left not connected by either emerged in Chicago in 1968, the entire world saw the response of liberals. The left lacks any history. The Rosenbergs were guilty. Government planning has not ended poverty. Laws against thoughts and prejudice have not eradicated racism. Unions suck. All that is left is a smugness—a smugness wrapped in the word “Progressive.” Intent wins over results. Style beats substance.

They even turn on their own. Earl Warren was despised by the far Right for enacting integration. Now he is despised for The Warren Report. The Ku Klux Klans’ wild theories about the JFK assassination are now most Liberals’ theories! Not even LBJ, the architect of the Great Society is clean. They believe he was in on the JFK shooting! They destroy their own, and all the work they accomplished.

Don’t ever call me Progressive!

LETTERS...WE GET LETTERS

Dear Michael,

Thanks for sending me *It's Only a Movie* #8.

Flat Bed is currently dead, but I’m writing some stuff for *Schlock*, a fanzine out of San Diego. I’m also working on a bigger project—a profile of Andy Milligan, director of *The Rats are Coming*, *The Werewolves are Here*; *The Ghostly Ones*; *Torture Dungeon...* to name a few.

Maybe you can help me. Information on Milligan is scarce. Do you happen to have any old fanzines that mention him?

Oh, I wanted to add something to Michael Ferguson’s Vincent Price article. In addition to being a damn fine actor and an avid art collector, Price was also a gourmet chef. During their world travels, Price and his wife Mary made it a point to visit highly-recommended restaurants and to sample the local cuisines. They gathered recipes from some of the world’s finest chefs, eventually collecting the cream of the crop in *A Treasury of Great Recipes*. Published in 1965, this is not lean cuisine; the Prices enjoyed meat, usually sauteed in butter or cream, cheese or whatever deliciously fattening ingredient is on hand.

Personally, I’ve never tried to cook anything in this book. The recipes are way over my head. Hell, Prices’ recipe for hot dogs has 11 ingredients. However, when I loaned the cook book to a friend who can cook and he made “Pepperoni don Salvatore” (green peppers in sauce), it was so good my mouth is watering just to think about it.

Even if I can’t cook anything, I enjoy the book simply for the introductions to the various recipes that Price wrote (“If you stay overnight in one of those charming Colonial guest rooms in the Wayside Inn...” or “Leftover sauerbraten is nothing to sneeze at when it is reheated in it’s own gravy.”) and the photographs of Price blowing on a spoon of hot soup or inspecting a particular cut of meat before offering it to his guests.

Doug Jones

2222 Harriet Ave. S #B3

Minneapolis Minnesota 55405

If any of our readers can fill Doug in on Milligan—please do!!!

Mike

VINCENT PRICE HOT DOGS!

These frankfurters are cooked in a hot sauce, and are good served in their sauce and eaten with a fork and knife. But if you feel, as I do, that hot dogs taste better eaten in the hand, you can put some of the sauce in the roll with the frank—and serve extra napkins.

SAUCE

1. In a large skillet combine: 1 cup pineapple juice, 1/2 cup chili sauce, 1 tablespoon dried bell peppers, 1/2 teaspoon English mustard, 2 tablespoons wine vinegar, 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt, 2 tablespoons soy sauce, 1 tablespoon molasses, and 2 tablespoons minced, sautéed onion.
2. Stir to mix well and simmer for 20 minutes.

FRANKFURTERS

1. Preheat over to moderate (350° F.)
2. Cut diagonal slashes across: 6 large frankfurters
3. Put them in a baking pan and cover with the sauce.
4. Bake in the moderate oven, uncovered, for 40 minutes. Baste with the sauce several times.

PRESENTATION

Place frankfurters in heated rolls with a few spoonfuls of sauce spread over each.

BACK ISSUES

Sorry—there aren't any! When we receive a request for an issue, we usually send the latest issue, but often reviews in other zines appear months after we publish and are no longer available. If you would like to drop us a card and an offer for a specific back issue, perhaps our members or subscribers will sell you their copy. We'll print the requests.

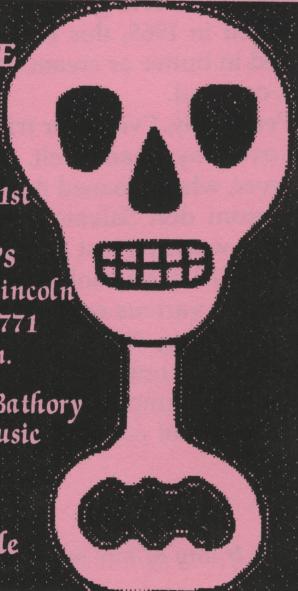
DEATH RATTLE AND HUM

Thursday
February 1st

Delilah's
2771 N. Lincoln
312-472-2771
8p.m.-2a.m.

DJ Lady Bathory
Gothic Music

\$2 Pete's
Wicked
Winter Ale



THE PSYCHOTRONIC FILM SHOW SCHEDULE

The Psychotronic Film Society continues with more bizarre, neglected films and music at Dellah's, 2771 N. Lincoln. Our programs are every Saturday at 6 pm. and are free. Call 312-4772-271 for more information.

CITY ON FIRE - SATURDAY JANUARY 27 - 6 pm. Ringo Lam directed this Hong Kong action film about a cop plant in a gang that is about to commit a robbery. A major influence on *Reservoir Dogs*.

ENTER THE DRAGON - SATURDAY FEBRUARY 3 - 6 pm. Bruce Lee died before this 1973 film was released and made him an international star. Directed by Robert Clouse, this martial arts classic still holds up today primarily because of Bruce Lee. A must!

ARMOR OF GOD - SATURDAY FEBRUARY 10 - 6 pm. Jackie Chan stars in this terrific action film which has minimal plot but loads of incredible stunts. Hey-it's also Mike Flores' birthday!

RAT PACK NIGHT - THURSDAY FEBRUARY 15 - 6 pm. The fun starts at 7:30 with a screening of *Ocean's Eleven* starring Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Sammy Davis Jr. This 1960 film about a casino heist is as cool as a martini! The film will be followed by DJ Psycho Mike Flores spinning Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra and Sammy Davis Jr.

PAINTED FACES - SATURDAY FEBRUARY 17 - 6 pm. Sammo Hung directed this terrific Hong Kong film about the training he and Jackie Chan went through as a child! A must for Chan fans!



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c/o

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